The Scarce Chocolate-tip: *Clostera anachoreta* D. & S. (Lep.: Notodontidae) in South-east Kent

By Bernard Skinner *

The history of *anachoreta* in Kent has been well documented by J. M. Chalmers-Hunt in his critical account of Kentish Lepidoptera. Briefly this species has been taken sporadically between 1858 and 1912 along the seaboard area from Deal through Dover and Folkestone to Hythe, although there are isolated records from Ashford, Romney and Minster. Most were found in the larval state with records of ova on one occasion, pupae on two and as adults on three. Evidence would therefore indicate that *anachoreta* was resident at intervals, if not permanently, throughout this 54 year period. For the next 40 years records appear to be non-existent, perhaps no one bothered to look. Probably owing to the advent of the mercury vapour light trap, the species was noted at Dover on the 8th August 1951, at Lydd on the 9th August 1953, again at Dover on the 26th July 1964, and at Dungeness on the 16th August 1974.

The rest of this paper deals mainly with my involvement with this species and begins on the morning of the 19th August 1978 when a very excited Ted Wild informed me of his capture of a male *anachoreta* the previous night at Dungeness. Ten M.V.L.s were operated on the 'Ness' that night and again several days later, but despite favourable weather conditions no specimens were seen. During September, myself and others made several unsuccessful attempts to find larvae by searching and beating Sallow, Black Poplar and Aspen in the Dungeness, Lydd and Greatstone areas.

The 4th August 1979 saw me once again on the 'Ness', and shortly before dusk I was joined by Messrs. C. Lane, R. Lane, J. Platts, J. Porter and P. M. Stirling. An almost full moon prevented ideal collecting conditions, however the north west breeze which had prevailed during the day had dropped and the temperature was warm and the humidity very high. Fortunately thick cloud cover came over later in the night causing a small but perceptable rise in temperature this turned an average night into a very good one. The first round of the traps produced nothing exceptional, species such as *Lasiocampa trifolii flava* C.-H., *Dasychira fascelina* L. and *Eilema pygmaeola pallifrons* Zell. were in good numbers and the three Lymantrids — *Euproctis chrysorrhoea* L., *E. similis* Fuesl., and *Leucoma salicis* L. were then very common and by the end of the night their abundance proved embarrassing. Several times the act of brushing a female *chrysorrhoea* off ones face resulted in an unpleasant attack of Urticaria. Just after 12.30 the traps were revisited and this time I was rewarded with a female *anachoreta* in fair condition. Having passed the inspection of those present she was enclosed with a sprig of sallow in a three inch plastic container lined with tissue and capped

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with netting. It might be appropiate to add here that over 90 eggs were laid on all the surfaces except the sallow and the eggs took 11 days to hatch at indoor temperature. An uneventful round of the traps took place at 3 a.m. and at 4 a.m. after the others had departed, I decided to empty the traps of the large numbers of insects and so enable them to find adequate cover before the arrival of dawn. It was on this round that I took a second *anachoreta,* a male in fine condition.

The following night in the company of Messrs. R. G. Chatelain and C. Hart, two more males were seen both appearing after 12.30.

As a detailed account of additional records will shortly appear in a Supplement to the *Butterflies and Moths of Kent,* it is perhaps sufficient here to note that between the 14th and 26th August, further specimens were seen by Messrs. R. Fairclough, C. Hart, T. Harman, A. Jenkins, J. Platts and G. Senior, bringing the total up to 18 males and 3 females.

The occurrence therefore of 21 specimens seems to indicate the presence of a breeding colony in the Dungeness area, whether or not it is of recent origin is anybody's guess. It is possible that a species with the habit of flying late could remain undetected in an area frequently visited by lepidopterists, but what is perhaps more puzzling is the complete lack of records of first brood idividuals which should occur between late April and mid June.

References

Chalmers-Hunt, J. M., 1962-1968. *The Butterflies and Moths of Kent.* 2: 37-39, 356.

Coster, W. L., 1975. The Scarce Chocolate-tip (*Clostera anachoreta* D. & S.) in Kent in 1974. *Ent. Rec. J. Var.,* **87**: 125.

Wild, E. H., 1978. *Clostera anachoreta* D. & S. in Kent in 1978. *Ent. Rec. J. Var.,* **90**: 274.

Some Observations on the Habits of the Larvae of the Brown-tail (Euproctis chrysorrhoea L.) in the Eastbourne District. — The Brown-tail is a common insect in this area, the usual foodplant being blackthorn upon which the larvae spin their conspicuous webs. During the course of the last several years, observations on this species show that the larvae also occur here on hawthorn, sallow and *Cotoneaster.* The latter foodplant is unusual in that it is very local in its native form, occurring along the cliffs at Eastbourne and is the species *Cotoneaster horizontalis.* Observations on the larvae in the spring showed that they were far more advanced on this than the colonies upon blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and this may possibly be accounted for by the fact that the latter foodplant loses its leaves totally and the overwintering larvae must wait for the buds to break before they can start feeding, whereas the former foodplant being a semi-evergreen provides the larvae with immediate food. — M. Hadley, 7 Beverington Close, Eastbourne, Sussex BN21 2SB.